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Notes: Lenten Address: The Agonized Look (Luke 22:44), 1949

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Immanuel. March 9, 1949

1. All of us have learned how difficult, if not impossible, it is to understand and feel the sorrow & suffering of another person - when tragedy strikes a friend, we can be and should be sympathetic (suffer with) - but no matter how hard we may try, we can really never enter the inner recesses of the heart of another where the last and deepest suffering takes place - e.g. a little child run over by a truck - shocked - our hearts went out to the parents and to the neighbor who so innocently was a part of the tragedy. expressed our sympathy - understood how they felt - and yet - the last measure of suffering & sorrow was still theirs alone - God could enter into it - right into the heart of it - but not we - there are always inner recesses and corners of the human personality which another person cannot reach - the ultimate sorrow of the heart and soul must be borne alone -

2. Sure you understand why I mention this - because the task we have been taught is even more difficult - we must try to understand, as clearly as we possibly can, the suffering of a Man, not in a house in Valpo, but in a garden 6000 miles away in space and 2000 years away in time - further, a man who was not only man, but God - and we must understand this suffering not

Many say
friends

thoroughly open

Immanuel March 9, 1949

only with our minds, but with our hearts - we must really sympathize - suffer with - at least a part of His sorrow must become ours & some of His pain our pain - and if you ask why? all I can say is that all of us have lived in His heart that night - that in a way which we can never fully understand we were a part of the agony of Golgotha - the sin which we committed so easily & carelessly yesterday or today was in that garden - & was the basic, ultimate, terrible reason for one of the drops of blood, the sword in His heart - ^{His face distorted -} the agony of His soul - What you have?

3. And so - every reason for us to look very ^{two things} closely at the scene in the garden - just what ^{1. the fact} was going on there? and what does it mean? ^{2. the meaning}

Well, very strange - from time immemorial men had dreamed of God and the gods and of their meeting with divinity - had built altars and temples - had imagined the gods seated on Mt. Olympus or elsewhere, forever young, forever fair - aloof & cold - these gods were interested in men but only to see that their laws were carried out and transgression of the laws of the Universe was properly & inevitably punished - gods were gods and men were men - and that was the way the Universe was arranged -

4. But here now - something amazingly different. Jesus ^{on His} Christ, God and Man in one person, ^{lies on His}

Inmanuel March 9, 1949

face in Gethsemane this sweat falls like drops of blood upon the earth - and the immeasurable ^{space} space around Him is filled with whirling sun and stars which He has placed in the long ^{whirling} ^{importance} of the worlds - and His hands - the same hands - ^{creating} clutch the dust of the garden in agony - and the Paschal moon, this moon, shines over winter ocean and waving tree-tops - and looks down to light His face torn by an agony which was new on the earth - there had never been anything like it - it may be that for some of us in the church tonight there will be in the years ahead some dark valleys, some agony of soul, some great loneliness - but we shall never know anything like this - the world's aching sadness, this drying up of the fountain of life, this unimaginable sickening of soul - this was God and man suffering and God can suffer more than man.

5. And so - beginning to touch the meaning of the scene - the reason and purpose of it - warning: a great many people will not be quick to see the true meaning of the agony under the Paschal moon - various reasons. mainly because the true meaning is intimately a terribly personal - it concerns every human being that ever lived - all of us - and we do not like to be directly involved in such terror of soul - the other ^{responsible} ^{for creating} ^{the} preliminary note - in order to soften down the

Immense March 9, 1949.

iniquity of us all. "Behold the Lamb, etc." - in some mysterious way, known only to God, all the timorous sin & sorrow of all life & history gathered in that soul that night in the garden - all of it was there - personal & up-to-date. That bit of gossip - impurity - murder in Chicago's newspapers - the hate in our hearts & the massacres of concentration camps. all of it, all of it, on His head. He was sin - sin & evil incarnate that hour - and having said that, we shall never really know what it means -

7. Except in one way - the meaning for Him we shall never understand - the meaning for us is perfectly clear. we can have this ^{unfathomable} thought gone, gone and forgiven - by faith in His suffering - our faces can be calm & peaceful - by faith in His agony - we can look up to God because He looked down into the lowest corners of hell - every evil thing that worries us, every hidden sin, every fault. we can leave in the garden with Him - He took care of it - it is His and no longer ours - this, you see, is the Christian religion - the religion of atonement, redemption, forgiveness - and there is nothing else like it under the sun

8. And there is one more thing we should take from this ^{unfathomable} thought - the high & firm resolve to do a little better in the future than we have in the past - Pascal once said "Jesus Christ is on agony until the end of the world" and Upton Sinclair once wrote that

begins so low down

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Immanuel - March 9, 1949

one of the greatest causes of His suffering in the garden was the vision of what His children would do to Him in all the years to come - and so today His agony is heard in all the sobs of our time, ⁱⁿ our communion with God, and the suffering of all the image of God throughout the world treated worse than brutes of the field - there is no greater way to live than to hear in all the pain, etc. of our time the echo of His agony - to resolve to help wherever we can, and to hear, above the roar & confusion of our mad world, His voice again & again: "Fear not, my child, I have already travelled that road. On each step of the terrible way I have left for you a drop of my blood and the print of my eternal mercy"...

and there is nothing more

that you can ask of God -

my lost & lonely child.

Pain
Lonely
Lonely